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ABSTRACT

This document provides current and historical information about rural education in Manitoba, Canada. The report's eight sections and the information they provide are as follows: (1) "Background" emphasizes the importance of education to rural residents, and describes the trend toward education for all ages; (2) "Early Education in Manitoba" traces the history of public education in the area; (3) "Modern Rural Society" presents statistics dealing with the decline of agricultural activity and changes in the composition of the population; (4) "Rural Schools and the Community" stresses the responsibility of rural schools to serve the needs of the community and to use community resources to improve education; (5) "The Costs" suggests ways rural schools fund education while faced with rural depopulation, lower farm income, and an aging population; (6) "Myths Surrounding Rural Schools" disputes the myths that bigger schools are better and that rural schools are all the same and considers the advantages and disadvantages of small schools; (7) "Teachers in Rural Schools" indicates problems with teacher turnover and describes skills and characteristics needed by rural teachers; and (8) "Training and Post Secondary Education" provides statistics on university and non-university enrollment since 1960 and explains how universities are meeting the needs of the rural population. (KS)

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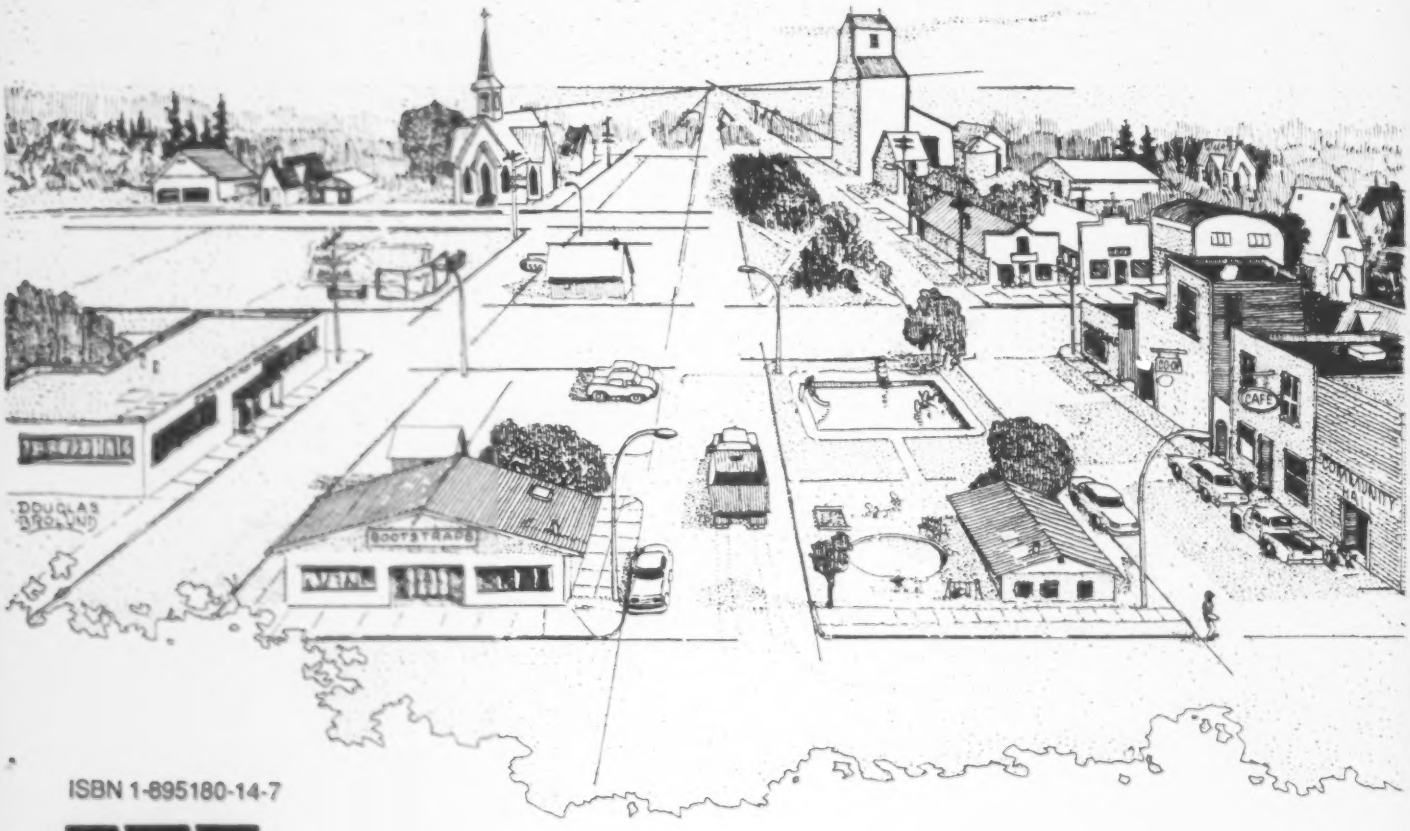
Rural Education in Manitoba



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WESTARC GROUP INC.

CONSULTING ■ TRAINING ■ COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■ APPLIED RESEARCH

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Towards an Understanding: Rural Education in Manitoba

A Document produced for the conference:
Prairie Forum on Rural Education

November 8 - 9, 1990
Brandon, Manitoba

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Introduction

Post-secondary education in Western Manitoba traces its beginnings back to the Prairie College in Rapid City. The Prairie College was established in the spring of 1880 and opened in the fall of that year. The primary purpose of the college was to train and educate young men for the ministry. Dr. John Crawford and Rev. George Davis secured 1,110 acres of land for the College site. Dr. Crawford's plan was to have the students farm in the summer and study in the winter. With the help of his students Dr. Crawford managed to build a small stone building that would house three classrooms, a kitchen, and a residence for 12 students. However, the Prairie College closed down in 1882, when the eastern Baptist financial support failed to materialize as a result of a planned Baptist college in Toronto.

After the Prairie College closed Rev. Davis felt the area still needed an academy to provide educational facilities, particularly for mature students. He convinced his brother-on-law, Professor Samuel James McKee to build an academy in the Rapid City area to replace the Prairie College.

The McKee Academy in Rapid City was open to men and women and taught a number of courses including: preparatory courses (reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and geography) academic courses (English, composition, geography, history, algebra, geometry, bookkeeping, physiology, latin greek and French) teachers courses commercial courses, fine arts and music.

In 1880, Dr. McKee moved his academy to Brandon which was quickly expanding as a result of the movement of the main CPR line. The curriculum at McKee's Brandon Academy remained similar to the Rapid City Academy until 1897, when the Academy began teaching University of Manitoba arts courses. The Brandon Academy was now being called Brandon College because of the added University of Manitoba courses.

The Baptist Convention of Manitoba and the North-West Territories and Professor McKee joined efforts in 1899 to formally establish Brandon College. Brandon College incorporated the ideas of both Dr. Crawford and his Baptist theological college and Professor McKee's academy for local area residents.

Brandon College offered a number of areas of study including theology, ethics, classics, mental science, french, natural science, history, mathematics, english, biblical literature, commercial courses as well as an Academic Department for high school students Dr. McKee acted in a number of faculty and administrative positions with Brandon college during the college's first 25 years.

Brandon College went through a number of changes in structure, funding and affiliation, but Dr. McKee's idea of providing higher education to Western Manitoba residents has remained consistent. To honour Dr. McKee as a pioneer of Brandon University and post secondary education in western Manitoba, Brandon University and the Brandon University Alumni Association are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Dr. McKee's Brandon Academy.

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Background

by Fred McGuinness

There is no secret why education is so revered by rural residents of the Prairies. There is a strong likelihood they know family stories from the period of settlement which tell of grandparents and their yearning to build the New Society. As individuals they built shelters for their families; collectively they built schools for their children. For those who had no cash to pay their school taxes there was an alternative they found entirely acceptable: they did the building themselves.

Those early schools have been honoured in song, epic poem, even hard-covered books. They were great moulders of character. In frontier times, the annual concert was the social highlight of the year. Prairie folklore rebounds with tales of youthful scholars huddled around the pot-bellied stove. Too warm on one side, not warm enough on the other.

It is through the forces of education that one can trace the path of rural society. School populations rose and fell in a direct relationship with the price of wheat. There were upheavals such as enforced closures, and the necessary consolidation at some distant point.

In this new decade there is a new role for the schools. In some enlightened centres they are the hub of community activities. When the regular students leave at 3:30, other students take over, many of them mature, even senior in years. Popular courses today include up-grading, re-entry training, trade training, distance education, arts and crafts. While some of these courses are for personal enjoyment, there are many designed to improve the likelihood of employment.

This new emphasis on education for all ages is in keeping with important current research. When the WESTARC Group asked rural Manitobans to list their principle concerns, education, by a wide margin, was first on the list. When asked to expand on this decision, respondents said they were talking about education in the broadest possible sense, education for living; education for making a living.

They may not have known it, but these respondents were givng echo to the words of the great Maritime educator, Marshal Coady. He was of the opinion that the citizen who has ceased to learn "ought not to be allowed to wander around loose in these dangerous days."

To assist in this learning process, the rural school of today must be interested in all types of training, for citizens of all ages.

Early Education in Manitoba

Public education in Manitoba began as a result of the fur trade in the Red River in the 1820s . As a centre for the buffalo hunt there was a large enough centralized population of children to merit teachers; the Hudson Bay Company had sent three teachers for factors' and servants' children in its northern forts. With the arrival of the Selkirk settlers came an impetus for education in Assiniboia. Prior to 1870, there were no statues or common laws concerning education at Red River. Education was deemed to be the responsibility of the various religious institutions.

On May 3, 1871, the Manitoba Legislature assented to the Act to Establish a System of Public Education in Manitoba. The system essentially perpetuated the existing educational scheme. Public funds would support a system of separate denominational schools: one half of the schools were to be Protestant, one half Catholic. Although primary education was the first priority, plans did include higher educational facilities.

Against this background, the Greenway government in 1890 acted to separate religion and education. Administrative control of education was moved into the Department of Education. An advisory board was struck to dictate and monitor academic aspects under the direct control of the Department. The Public Schools Act abolished denominational schools and decreed that religious exercises were to be held prior to closing time in the afternoons.

With the influx of immigrants into Manitoba at the turn of the century, Manitoba had a varied assortment of bilingual schools. This was deemed to be unsuitable by authorities and in 1916 an amendment to the Public Schools Act made English the language of instruction. This year also saw the introduction of the School Attendance Act - all children 5-14 years of age now were to attend a public or private school, by law.

In the 20 years after 1916, various amendments to the Public Schools Act and related acts reflected the gradually changing structure and philosophy of education in Manitoba. School districts were established with their finances supervised by municipal and public utility boards. Local school boards were permitted to charge fees for secondary education. A system of equalization was established to allow special monies to go to schools in the poorest rural areas and unorganized territories. School districts also were established in certain areas under the jurisdiction of an official trustee. It was decided that those schools with less than five students would be closed. A Board of Reference was formed to establish teachers' salaries. The Select Committees of the Legislative Assembly (1935, 1937, 1945) further evolved the school system with the introduction of the principle of larger school units for administration in conjunction with the retention of local boards with specific powers.

The 1957 Royal Commission on Education in Manitoba, under chairman R.O. MacFarlane, recommended, among other things that more money be given to the education system in Manitoba and that an administrative system should place secondary education under a Division Board but would leave elementary education under Local Boards. A Provincial Boundaries Commission was

created to establish the boundaries of prospective divisions with consideration for geographical, economic and sociological factors. An amendment of the Public Schools Act of 1958 allowed the establishment of school divisions for secondary education. By June 1959, 40 divisions were in operation. Nineteen sixty-six saw the formation of the Frontier School Division, organized to incorporate 38 isolated communities. The province has been divided into 47 divisions and one area.

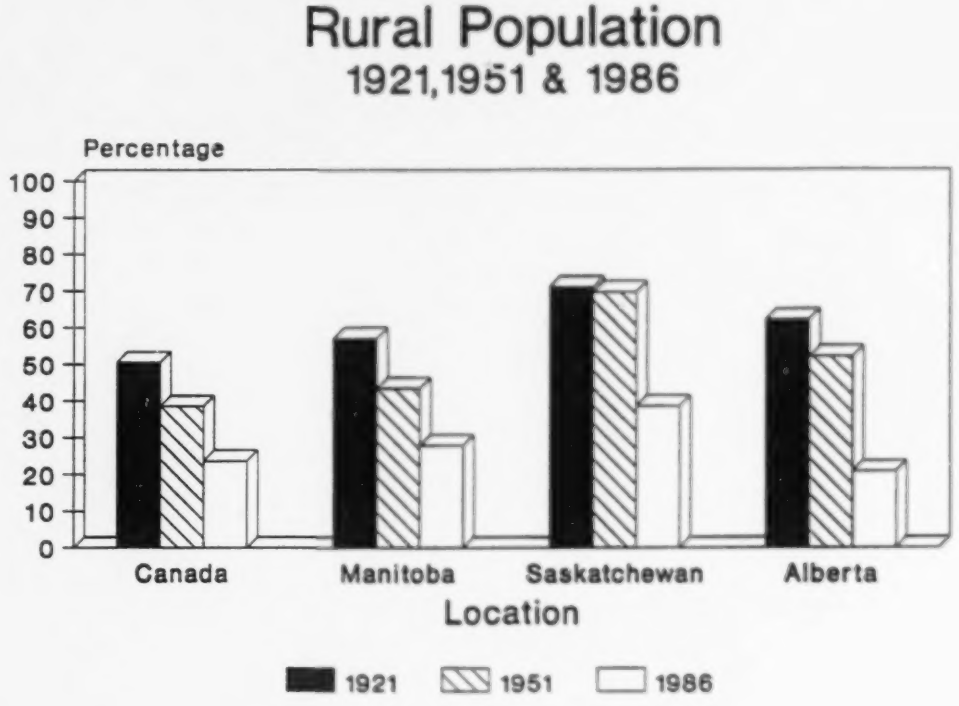
In 1963 the Michener Royal Commission sought to address the issue of the inequity of school taxation and recommended that all education costs be assumed by the province, presumably in the interests of maintaining uniform standards. Of course, there would be a subsequent loss of local autonomy. This was not favourable received by the rural areas which were not eager to relinquish control over their schools. Ten of the 48 divisions were single district divisions while the rest included a number of elementary districts. It was the goal of the government to establish unitary divisions throughout the province and after much discussion and two referendums, this was finally achieved in 1972.

Between 1959 and 1971, education appeared to flourish — there were higher provincial grants for educational buildings, equipment, curricula, new texts and teachers' salaries and enrollment increased. In the years after 1970, 8.5 to 9 per cent of the Canadian GNP was spent on education and training. By 1983-84, it was 7.8 per cent.

Modern Rural Society

Rural Manitoba today hardly resembles the Manitoba of a century ago. Technology, population shifts, economic trends, the changing climate are all factors that make present day rural society more dynamic than ever before.

Figure 1

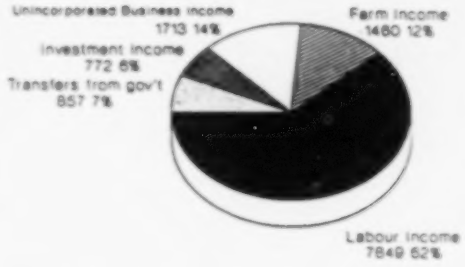


Source: Statistics Canada

The Prairies throughout the last 100 years have been essentially a rural society with rural economic activity centred around agriculture. Canada is now primarily an urban country and those areas which remain rural can no longer depend upon agriculture alone to support the local economy. The farm, too has changed. The number of farms is decreasing while the size increasing. With modern equipment, one person is now able to cultivate far more land than previous generations. The cost of farm production however, has increased and many farmers are now looking to off-farm employment to subsidize the farm business. This in turn has lead to an increased demand for both economic diversification to provide employment opportunities, and additional training to allow the farmer to effectively compete for off-farm employment.

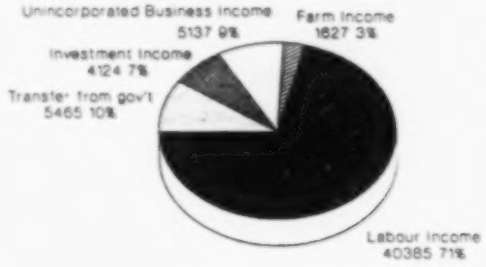
Figure 2

Sources and Disposition of Personal Income



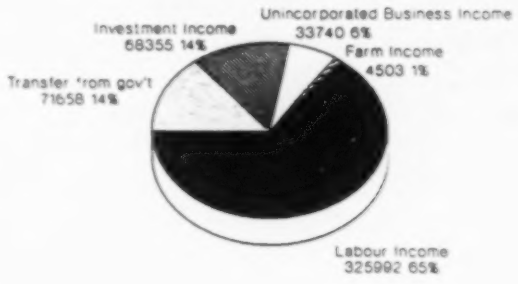
(millions of dollars) 1948

Sources and Disposition of Personal Income



(millions of dollars) 1968

Sources and Disposition of Personal Income



(millions of dollars) 1988

The population of rural Canada is getting older. In the last census, Manitoba communities with populations under 5,000 had over twice the average percentage of residents 65 years of age and over than was the case for Manitoba cities. The shrinking school age population is reflected in elementary and secondary school enrolment. In Canada levels peaked in 1970 at 5.84 million and have since declined to 4.95 million by 1984.

Children make up a decreasing proportion of the rural population. This alone has a dramatic effect on rural society. At the beginning of the 1970s, 3 of every 10 Canadians were 14 years of age or younger; now the figure is 2 of every 10. There are now approximately 5.4 million children in Canada, down 1 million from 20 years ago.

Children today lead much different lives than their parents. Most are healthy and well-fed but the level of poverty is continuing to rise. Over fifteen per cent of the nation's children live in low income families and the majority of these are also single parent families. Thirteen per cent of children in Canada live in single parent homes, up from nine per cent in 1980. These factors, along with the increase in the number of two parent families where both parents work, have resulted in more children spending part of their pre-school years in day care. It is also interesting to note that today 3 of every 4 children live in a home with a video recorder.

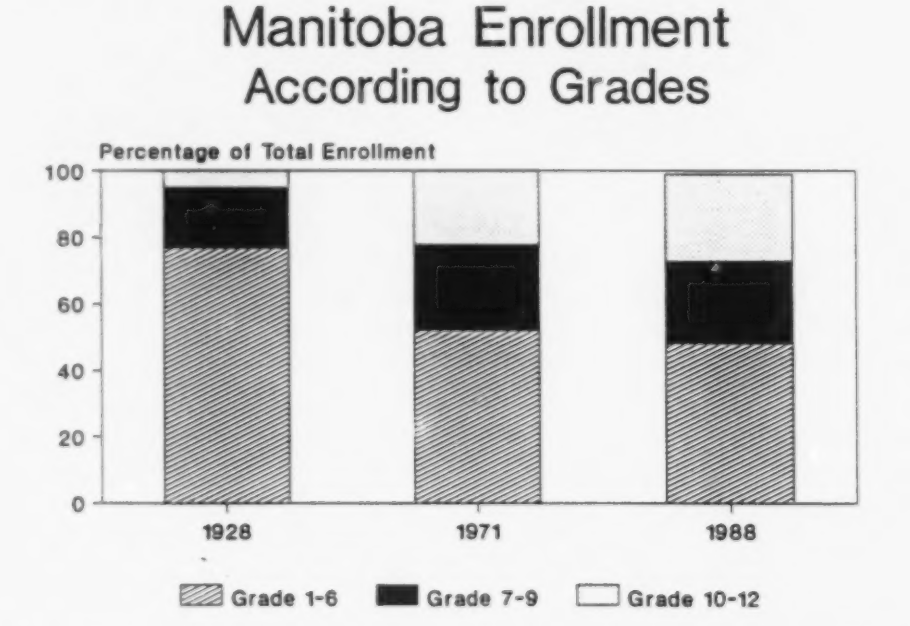
Rural Schools and the Community

To create healthy effective schools, it is first necessary to recognize the enormous importance of community in the life of any given school and the people in it. Small schools and communities often tend to operate as a single integrated social structure. As rural society changes, so too must the rural school. The local school provides a focus for rural residents and can serve to unite the community. Yet it must also serve the changing needs of that community. The focus of the rural economy is shifting away from agriculture. Preparing rural students for the future may require a shift in curriculum, placing more emphasis on entrepreneurship, science and technology, and leadership.

The clientele of rural schools is shifting. In earlier years very few individuals completed Grade 10, today a greater percentage of students are completing Grade 12 and while total school enrollment may be decreasing more students are completing higher grade levels. Schools are no longer just a place for children and young adults. Adults, too are seeking to update their skills.

In Alberta, a new trend is appearing among students in the quest for post-secondary education. In 1988, there were 5000 more students in Grade 12 than there had been in 1985. Students are returning to Grade 12 after graduation, in effect creating a four year high school. Competition has become stiff for entrance into the University of Alberta (which has raised its admission average to the general arts program from 70 per cent to 73 per cent) and students are returning to high school to repeat courses while still holding part-time jobs to earn money for further education.

Figure 3



In general farmers are becoming better educated. In 1986 the farm population aged 15 and over averaged 11 years of schooling, two full years more than in 1971. As well, there was a sharp increase in the share of the farm population that held a university degree with fewer than 1% in 1971 to 5% in 1986.

The 1986 census showed that 1/4 of men in the farm population have less than a grade 9 education; this group has the least amount of schooling. Forty-eight per cent of rural women hold a high school or trade school diploma; 40 per cent of rural men do. This difference between the sexes holds for all age groups, although the gap is lesser with the young. Forty-four per cent of the farm population had at least a high school diploma in 1986, compared to 14 per cent in 1971. The proportion of persons who had not finished Grade 9 decreased from 43 per cent (1971) to 22 per cent (1986). The reasons for this include more accessible education, awareness of the need for more education, and technological changes in farming that make formal education necessary for success.

The relationship between the school and the region or community it serves is interdependent. While the school provides education for the young, employment for local residents, and much needed money for the local economy, it cannot operate without the co-operation and assistance of the community it serves. And in fact, it cannot operate unless it serves its community. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident that in small rural towns. The success of small rural schools is not just an issue of education, but also an issue of community development with broad implications across the whole of rural society.

The most important resource in any community is people and rural schools certainly benefit from making use of this resource. Volunteers from the community run extracurricular activities, serve as teacher aides, work in the library, raise funds, etc. This not only reduces the teacher workload, but further integrates school and community. Beside volunteer programs, community involvement also takes place in the form of student apprenticeships in local business, business support of school programs, decentralization of authority (for example, community/school councils, or student participation in the running of the school) and relationships with local post-secondary institutions.

The Costs

Today, there are concerns that our public school system is in deep trouble and that high school graduates are not educated as well as their parents. Rural depopulation, lower farm income, ageing of population. Where does that leave the small rural school?

Figure 4

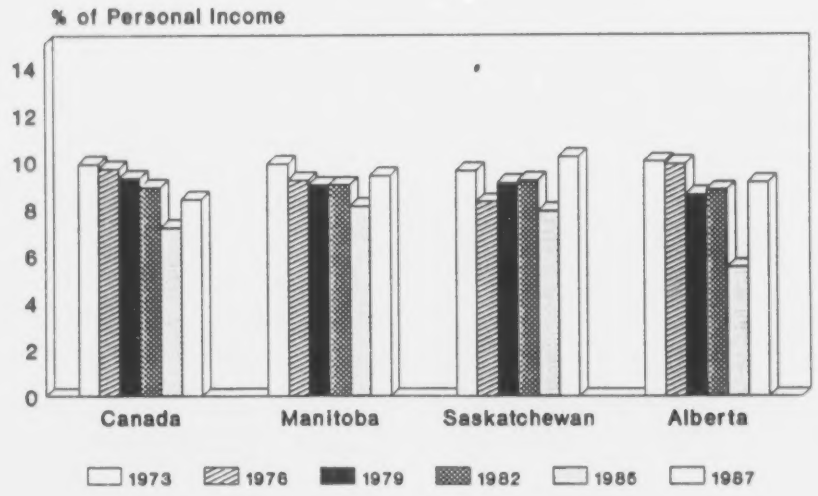
School Closures and New Construction in Rural Manitoba 1961-1989

Year	No. closures	No. constructed	Year	No. closures	No. constructed
1961	9	8	1976	2	1
1962	8	1	1977	2	1
1963	4	0	1978	2	2
1964	10	1	1979	1	1
1965	9	1	1980	0	0
1966	31	1	1981	1	1
1967	75	10	1982	0	2
1968	6	1	1983	0	0
1969	3	1	1984	1	1
1970	1	1	1985	1	1
1971	2	3	1986	0	1
1972	2	1	1987	2	1
1973	3	3	1988	1	1
1974	2	2	1989	1	1
1975	1	1	Totals	180	49

Rural schools do not enjoy the powerful constituency they once did and they are feeling the squeeze of economic restraint. There is the often heard argument that rural schools cost too much, but one must ask in comparison to what — transporting students in increasing numbers to urban or regional institutions, providing room and board to those who live too far away to travel every day? What is the cost of transferring the most valuable resource for the future, our children, to another environment? Just as it costs more to provide a reasonable education to physically and developmentally handicapped children, it should be expected that "geographically" handicapped children will require more funds than their urban counterparts.

Figure 5

Expenditures on Education in Relation to Average Personal Income

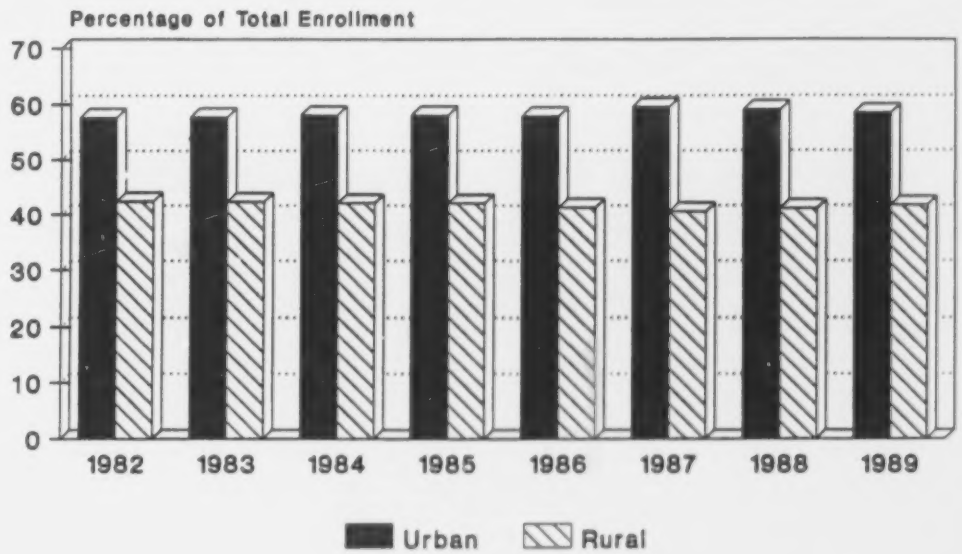


Source: Education in Canada

In funding rural and small schools, it is important to realize that costs don't automatically increase as schools get smaller or decrease as they get larger. Most cost differentials associated with size are due to personnel costs reflected in pupil/teacher ratio differences and administration time. An Alberta study on the support of small school jurisdictions stated that despite economics of scale and insufficient program offerings, small jurisdictions had increased involvement of the student and community in school affairs and that the social value of smallness not only justified their existence but was a rationale for it.

Figure 6

School Enrollment: Manitoba Rural and Urban

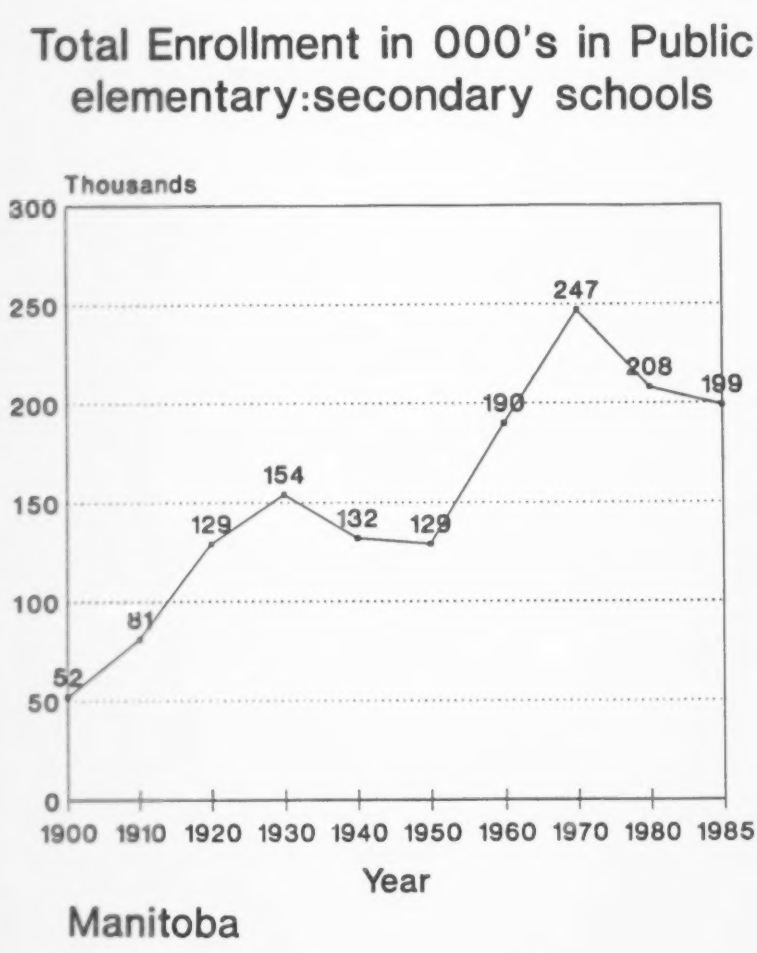


Source: Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

In looking at enrollment figures in Manitoba, it is interesting to note that while school enrollment is declining the ratio of urban to rural students remains relatively the same.

Rural schools have been quite creative in dealing with financial restrictions by sharing resources, making use of parental assistance, hiring generalists, promoting individualized instruction and independent study and doing without sufficient equipment and facilities.

Figure 7



In the early 1900s, provincial ministries of education began to develop primary and secondary correspondence education for children unable to attend school. Today, correspondence education is in its element when it is part of regular school. It expands the curriculum, aids in the education of the gifted, helps students who have failed or fallen behind, can help solve timetabling difficulties and introduces students to an educational method they can take advantage of for the rest of their lives. Of course, correspondence education still offers courses for adults to continue their education.

Manitoba Correspondence Branch in 1988-89 provided educational programs to Manitobans regardless of their health, economic status or geographic location with 8128 students and 11,073 course registrations.

Myths Surrounding Rural Schools

There are a number of myths surrouding rural schools. Perhaps the most prevalent is that bigger schools are better schools, and therefore, urban schools must be better because they are bigger. In fact, large urban schools increasingly look to the traditional small rural one-room school education practices for innovative ideas, such as peer tutoring and cross-age or family grouping in individualized instruction.

Another myth is that, regardless of where they are and who attends them, rural schools are all the same; all their problems, successes and prospects are identical and thus can be dealt with all at once and in the same way. In reality, it could be said that the only commonality that rural schools

Figure 8

Sizes of Schools by Enrollments

	Canada	MB.	Sask.	Alberta
Elementary Schools	12,152	687	840	1343
Secondary Schools	3,235	157	166	351
Elementary by enrollment				
49 & less	1601	180	156	235
50-99	1111	66	134	151
100-99	2723	144	242	303
200-299	2741	129	173	236
300-399	1956	85	87	180
400-499	1125	45	25	144
500-999	871	38	22	83
1000-1499	9	-	-	-
1500-1999	3	-	1	-
2000 +	1	-	-	-
not reported	11	-	-	11
Secondary Schools				
49 & less	220	6	11	31
50-99	148	7	12	11
100-199	294	18	36	29
200-299	389	29	35	53
300-399	373	17	26	59
400-499	321	20	10	50
500-999	911	44	30	84
1000-1499	433	16	4	17
1500-1999	115	-	2	14
2000 +	30	-	-	2
not reported	1	-	-	1

Source: *Education in Canada: A Statistical Review for 1988-89.* Ottawa: Minister of Supply & Services, Canda, 1990.

share is that they are each different from the other. The term 'rural school' can refer to anything from a small building with a single teacher to a prosperous regional centre with numerous specialized teachers to an isolated northern outpost accessible only by air.

A corollary of this myth is that high standards mean standardization and that every program must be delivered in every school using the same methods. As far as a comparison in student achievement between small and large schools, there appears to be no significant differences. There can be no question that students in rural areas should receive a quality education designed for them. Appropriate curriculum for rural situations is generally not cost- effective to produce, and therefore is not considered by text book companies. Local ingenuity is but one way to address this concern and rural communities are certainly not lacking in that department.

The myths could be dispelled perhaps if we realized that "smallness is unique in more than just size". Small schools are not and should not be reshaped as little 'big' schools. Established theories of administration, management and organization cannot be applied to the small rural context simply because they were developed in a large urban context. Small schools are not just different from large schools in size but also in cultural philosophy. And in fact, there are many advantages to providing education in a small school environment. The small school can provide a greater opportunity for the participation of local residents in governing and developing the education of their children and indeed themselves. Closer relationships between students, teachers, parents and the community make for more frequent and less formal interaction. Students and teachers are less likely to get lost in the crowd, and participation in a wider variety of local settings is usually encouraged.Some studies show a negative relationship between attendance and population density, as well as attendance and school size. In other words, smaller schools seem to have fewer attendance problems.

As there are advantages, so too are there disadvantages. As probably every school board trustee knows, it is hard to attract and keep administrators and teachers.The demands placed upon a rural teacher are very different from those placed upon an urban teacher.

Due to staff and economic restrictions, there is not always the same variety of courses offered; for example, music and art are sometimes offered only on an occasional itinerant basis. Failed students are likely to end up in the same setting as in their previous years. Essentially, in a small town, it is hard not to know your neighbour's business. This may be tolerable to one raised in a rural setting but it can be quite disconcerting to a displaced urbanite. Small communities have a tendency to be more homogeneous than larger centres and minorities of any kind may feel isolated.

The case for the continuation of small rural schools can be made. The responsibility for moving ahead in the small schools area must be placed upon those working and living in the small or rural community with the concentrated assistance of central educational agencies and services.

In pursuit of quality education for rural schools, planners must remember that rural schools and their communities differ from their urban counterparts; rural communities differ from each other; rural schools and communities exist as a single integrated social structure.

Teachers in rural schools

A country-wide poll carried out for the Canadian Education Association suggests that parents in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies are more satisfied with their children's teachers than in other parts of the country. It was perceived that residents in these regions have closer relations with schools and school boards and do not feel alienated from the school systems.

Teachers have an important role in any community and in rural areas that role can be critical. If they are commuting from an urban area to teach, they may not be as involved in the community as if they lived there. This "lack" of community participation may be viewed as career ambition at the expense of the community's best interests. The rural school is much more reliant on the individual qualities of its teachers. An excellent teacher in a small school can have an unusually strong impact on the students. Similarly, a poor teacher can have just as strong an impact.

Teacher turnover can be a cause of critical discontinuity in the community. In a rural area, the close proximity of community affairs to the school makes intimate knowledge of the students critical. Teachers who are around for many years have a distinct advantage as do the students, who benefit from a more stable learning environment.

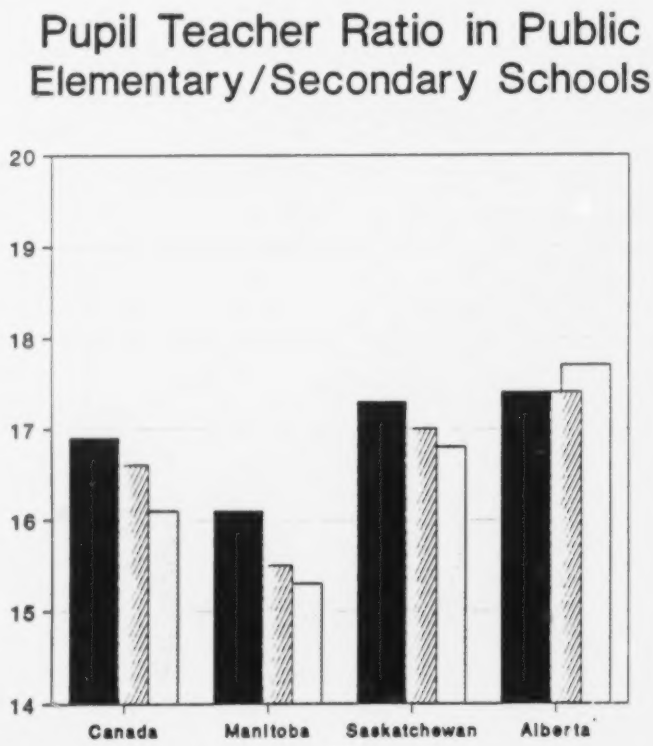
If two basic ways to systematically influence the quality of education in rural communities are to improve what is taught and improve how it is taught, mention must be made of the skills a successful rural teacher needs. Just as a rural curriculum must be locally relevant and not a scaled down urban curriculum, rural teachers need special consideration too. Teachers need to be taught how to teach in rural and small schools. They must know how to teach multigrade classes, integrate subjects, plan instruction in multiple subjects, supervise various extracurricular activities, plan a curriculum using community resources and residents and stay on top of the advances in education technology.

A recent Ontario study has indicated the importance of in-classroom conditions for teacher job satisfaction. Teachers expressed the desire for: freedom to decide how to teach their classes, greater student responsiveness, adequate materials and equipment, desirable class size and job security. One of the areas that was held in lesser importance was that of contact between the school and local groups and input into school policy. Both of these can be very important at the rural/small school level.

Reference should be made of the importance of female role models in rural schools. Women hold only a small proportion of administrative jobs in public schools. They are more likely to be administrators in small schools than larger ones at the elementary level; the opposite is true in secondary schools. In 1985-86, women were 45 per cent of principals and vice-principals in elementary schools with fewer than 100 pupils, but only 20 per cent in those with over 100 students. In high schools, women were 15 per cent of administrators in schools over 1000 students, 12 per cent in 400-1000 students and 10% in schools with less than 400 students. A majority of teachers — 57% — in Canada are women.

Part of the answer to staffing rural schools could be to increase the enrollment of local residents in post-secondary education. Former rural residents are more likely to return to rural areas, though not necessarily their home community, when they earn their degrees. It is true that it costs rural students more to attend university than students whose families reside closer to the educational institutions. Because of the cost, rural students may not attend. It is likely that urban graduates will gravitate back to their homes and family in search of work. Rural areas need more post-secondary students — in all areas.

Figure 9



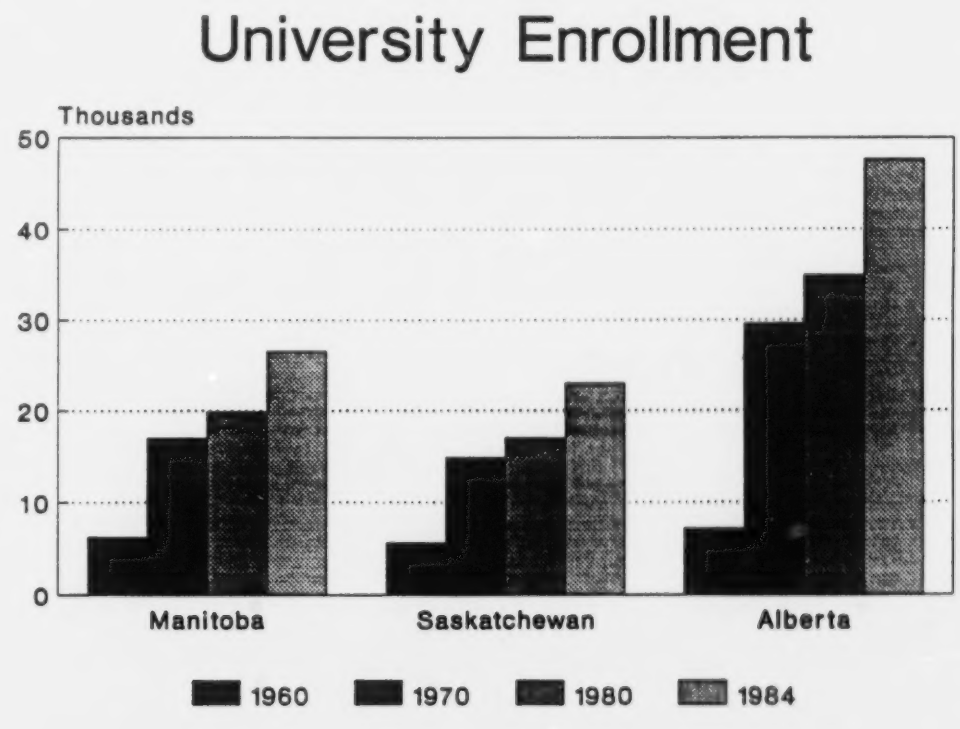
Training and Post Secondary Education

Education does not necessarily end once people leave school and settle into a job. But because of work or family responsibilities, few are able to attend full time programs. To improve job-related skills, increase earnings, expand employment opportunities or just for the sheer pleasure of it, people are enrolling in part time educational programs. The training requested is often as varied as the people asking for it. Computer training for various purposes from farm management to word processing is quite popular as is upgrading and basic literacy programs.

Total university enrollment in Canada rose 63 per cent since the beginning of the 1970s; in 1984-85 it rose from 466,000 to 760,000, and fully 3/4 of this growth was due to the increase in the number of women attending university. Women now make up the majority of university students. As well, there has been a significant increase in part time enrollment in post secondary institutions.

Small universities and community colleges have often grown out of their local community. Communities come together to create a local post-secondary institution and now the institution can

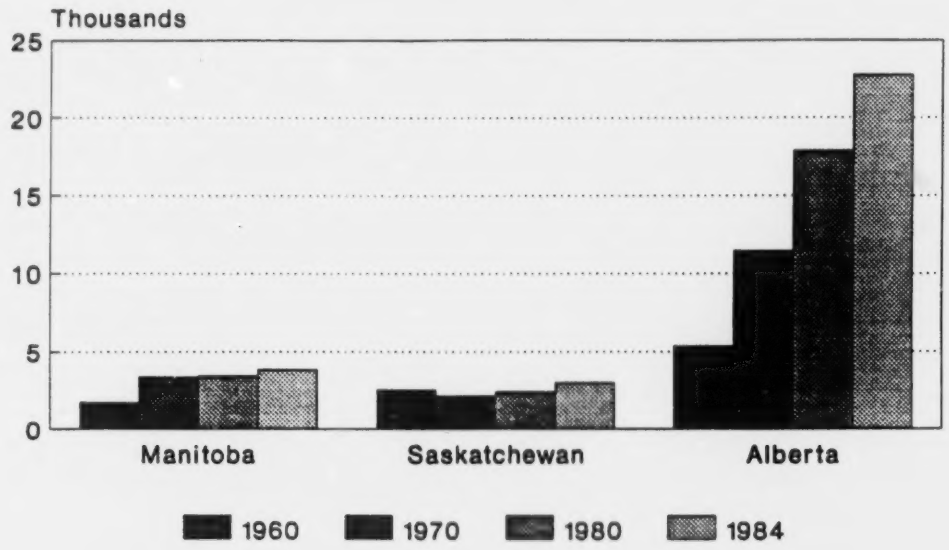
Figure 10



Source: WESTARC Group Inc.

Figure 11

Post-Secondary Non-University Enrollment



Source: WESTARC Group Inc.

pay back the community with access to its resources. The primary role of a university is to serve the academic needs of its students and faculty. The large university may also serve the needs of the nation. Smaller universities can serve their local communities.

Distance education programs are providing rural residents access to university and community college programs. Local schools often serve as the physical site of the programs. For example, Inter-universities North in Manitoba is offering university credit courses in The Pas, Dauphin, Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage, Russell and Thompson. The students are able, through satellite hook up to speak directly to professors as well as see them on a television screen.

Universities and their communities have a long relationship in Canada. The University of Saskatchewan provided an off-campus program to farm families early in this century, with faculty travelling to communities to conduct classes. Until the 1970s, the major distance education providers were the traditional institutions. Since then, institutions have been established which provide formal and informal open learning opportunities. For example, in 1972 Alberta gave Athabaska University the mandate to undertake a pilot project in the production, testing and application of learning systems leading to undergraduate degrees in arts and sciences and to operate by allowing students to enter and withdraw at any time.

Conclusion

While rural schools continue to become better schools, the government must be sensitive to critical factors if it is going to be responsive to the educational needs of rural areas. It must preserve the local autonomy of the community, allow program flexibility, use funds to open up options for the school and its students, and to establish a model of education for rural areas.

To urban areas, schools provide individual and community programs. The rural areas, schools are a means of community cohesion and continuity.

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